

Kent Connections

A Newsletter Published by Kent County Levy Court for its Employees March 2009



Employee of the Month *Dexter Kollie*

The Kent County department heads have selected DEXTER M. KOLLIE from the Department of Planning Services as the March 2009 Employee of the Month.

Dexter is a GIS Technician I in the Division of Geographic Information Systems and has been employed with Kent County since July 2000.

During his tenure Dexter has moved from the permits section to the Planning Office and eventually to the GIS Division, but his vast knowledge makes him well suited to work almost anywhere. He recently stepped up when called upon to cover a staffing gap in the Permits Section without missing a beat, although it had been nearly four years since working there.

According to Planning Services Director SARAH KEIFER, "Dexter can be counted on to do whatever we need done in the department. He quickly learns the basics of any position and during these difficult financial times, he understands well that everyone has to do their part."

Congratulations Dexter on a job well done!

COMING NEXT MONTH:

- > Who is Kent County's favorite Admin. Professional?
- > What are the proposed employee insurance rates?
- > How did the hearing on the pension incentive go?
- > What does the draft budget forecast for FY2010?
- > Who was elected to lead Employee Council?

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Kent Connections is published for the employees and retirees of Kent County Levy Court using Microsoft Publisher® & Microsoft Power-Point®. Comments, suggestions and story ideas should be addressed to: Kent County Personnel Office, 555 Bay Road, Dover, DE 19901, or given to Allan Kujala, Sophie Dear, Cathleen McLean, or Yvonne Messina. Or, call the Personnel Office at 744-2310.

Retirement incentive eyed as budget help

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Newspapers and television news broadcasts are filled with information about governmental budget shortfalls across the country, and like those other jurisdictions, Kent County is working hard to close a projected budget gap for the current Fiscal Year 2009 and next Fiscal Year 2010.

One of the many options under consideration is a Retirement Enhancement Program, which was formally introduced on February 24 and will be considered by Levy Court following a public hearing scheduled on March 10.

Currently, 34 active employees are eligible to retire with a Kent County pension, but continue to work. The group takes home over \$1.6 million in salaries each year, but it is expected that if all retired, 14 of those positions could remain unfilled for a period of time, perhaps saving as much as \$750,000 in FY2010 alone. Another \$185,000 of savings could be realized by filling the remaining 20 essential positions at the entry level pay rate.

If approved as drafted, the early retirement incentive ordinance offers those employees already eligible to retire from active service an "enhancement" in the form of a flat \$15,000 cash payment or the addition of five (5) years of service for pension benefit calculation purposes.

The ordinance further provides that the eligible employee must formally decide to retire by April 30 and make the retirement effective no later than May 31, 2009. The ordinance contains a provision which allows the County Administrator and Personnel Director to delay a retirement to June 30 for certain key employees. Levy Court Commissioners are ineligible from participation in the program.

Employees choosing the lump sum cash could roll over the figure into a deferred compensation account in order to save on payroll taxes.

Kent Co. Employee Obsessions

Take a minute to visit the display cases on the first and second floors of the Kent County Administrative Complex which feature an interesting collection of rappelling equipment owned and used by Custodian WILLIAM HALL. The second floor display case features photos and souvenirs collected by REINHOLD BETSCHEL, Asst Public Works Director—Wastewater Facilities Division, on his recent trip to China.



Got an interesting hobby or like to collect limited edition baubles? How about a collection of trinkets from far-away lands? Then show off your talent for amassing things—it may interest others as well.

HOW TO BE EXCEPTIONAL

JOB KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS—d. Prepare job aids and manuals which provide important work-related information for others; e. Regularly participate with user groups and professional associations and pursue opportunities to publicize material and present workshops at conferences.

PROFESSIONALISM—a. Serve as an organizational champion; b. Provide no indication that personal preferences exist; ...

G.A.U.G.E.—Kent Co's performance assessment tool

Go Green Kent Co!

Conserve At Work.

☉ Donate or properly recycle old electronic equipment; Recycle toner and ink cartridges; Drink filtered water instead of bottled water; Keep reusable dishes, silverware and mugs at the office;...



A Monthly Contest

A free movie ticket will be given to the first two employees who find the last four digits of his/her Social Security number in the current issue of Kent Connections and contacts the Personnel Office at 744-2310. JENNIFER DONAVON and JILL JOHNS, both of Planning Services, spotted their numbers in February. **9363**



EOM INSIGHT



Name: DEXTER KOLLIE

Job: G.I.S. Technician I

Years with the County: 8+

Education: Bachelors of Science in Environmental Science

My role as a County employee: G.I.S. Technician I /Permit Technician I

What keeps my job interesting: My co-workers/friends

What gives me a sense of accomplishment on the job: Happy people / Co-workers

Professional advice I would like to offer to other County employees: If you could, keep work at work.

Civic involvement: Community Theatre productions

After work I enjoy: Performing on stage, comic reading, writing scripts, filming, figure hunting . . . The list just goes on and on!

Favorite new movie: Really! . . . The Dark Knight

Favorite old movie: Batman Begins

Favorite TV shows: The list goes on and on, from cartoons to weekend drama (Grey's Anatomy, Desperate Housewives, Brothers & Sisters)

Favorite sports: Fencing, motor boating

Favorite music: All music except for Country

Favorite Kent County restaurants: La Tonalteca, Sonic, Hardee's, Taco Bell

Favorite Kent County event: Birthday parties, Christmas Banquets, Employee Council food gatherings

People (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Barack Obama, Jim Henson, and Bob Kane (creator of Batman)

Pet peeve: I don't have pets . . . No, I don't like it when people use anger or intimidation to get what they want.

If I've learned one thing in life, it's: To stop and take a look at things . . . Observe my surroundings, then move on!

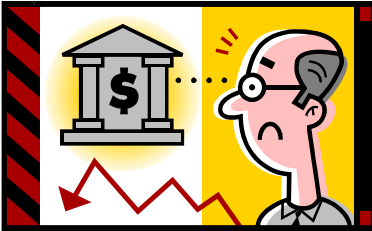
Who has had the most impact on my life: My mother and sister

Personal goals I have accomplished or would like to accomplish: Performing in front of an audience of more than 1,000 people.

2008 pension fund performance judged 'hopeful'

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Like everyone's 457 deferred compensation account and stock portfolios, the recession and bear market battered the County's pension fund in 2008 but despite the losses the fund's managers still outperformed the



comparative indices.

By the end of the calendar year, the fund dropped from \$24.6 million to \$18.3 million with an annual decline of 21.39%, but ahead of the Policy Index of -22.81%. For the year, the equity portfolio (stocks) declined but outperformed the Russell 1000 bench mark -20.86% to -21.94%. The plan's new international equity fund was a disappointment by declining 22.22% compared to the MSCI EAFE index of -19.95. The bond portfolio continued to outperform and beat the Lehman Brothers Aggregate Bond Index earning 4.82% compared to 4.58%.

The County's pension fund is allocated between large capitalized growth equities (stocks), large capitalized value equities (stocks), international equities, and bonds (fixed income) with an average 25/25/10/40 ratio. The pension assets are used to pay monthly pension benefits to County retirees totaling about **\$964,933** last year.

Each year the County must contribute to the pension fund to ensure that adequate assets are available to pay benefits when employees retire. The amount is determined on a biennial basis by an actuary, which is currently underway. The contribution in 2007 was \$1,221,003.

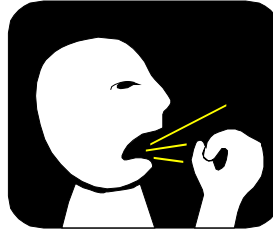
After analyzing performance of the State Pension Plan over many years, the Levy Court agreed last fall to a proposal to allow the County pension funds to be pooled and invested with the State's pension assets. The timing of the asset transfer was left to the Pension Review Committee, which opted to wait until the financial markets settle down. Ironically, last year the State pension fund declined 23.5% percent compared to the County's -21.39%.

For more information about the County pension plan, please contact the Personnel Office or visit the Pension Review Committee webpage.

Employee health insurance goes out for bid, again

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

It has almost become a ritual at this time of the year, to publish a multi-page request for proposals for employee health/medical insurance in hopes of saving a few dollars. Bid packages were made available electronically last month to potential insurers and interest has been high.



The other employee insurances—dental and supplemental life, were also bid out last month with the pending expiration of their three year contracts.

For many years now the County's health insurer has refused to guarantee coverage or rates for more than one year, so annual bidding has become routine.

Last year Blue Cross proposed a 9.9% increase on the heels of a 6.6% reduction the year before and was awarded the contract. It is hoped that some competition may moderate rates, especially since Aetna has become a bigger player in the state health insurance market. If any other insurance provider can meet the County's minimum coverage requirements with a competitive rate, the County would likely switch insurers.

The current contract with Blue Cross includes a monthly individual rate of \$611.95 for Blue Choice PPO option, \$562.57 for the Blue Care High HMO option, and \$523.07 for Blue Care Low HMO option. The Medicare supplement for eligible retirees costs the County \$312.34 per month. The County currently pays 100% of the individual rate and contributes 60% per month toward dependent coverage.

The RFP requests interested bidders to offer alternative options to the coverage levels currently provided by the County through Blue Cross. This could include cost sharing, higher deductibles, co-payments, or additional exclusions. It also seeks proposal for a self-insured health plan.

The State has closed its health plan, which was previously an option for the County to consider, but never did so seriously because the State plan refused to provide coverage to County retirees.

Ultimately, the Kent County Levy Court will decide on the type and level of coverages as part of the annual budget process.

**ON THE MOVE. . .**

Compiled by Yvonne Messina, Personnel Technician I

New Hire

02/01/09 SUSAN K. WILLSON, Appraisal Systems Administrator, Grade 11, Assessment Office

02/17/09 MICHAEL R. ROBBINS, Maintenance Mechanic I, Grade 6, Public Works/Wastewater Facilities

Promotion

02/09/09 J. SCOTT KIMBALL, Plant Operator I, Grade 6 to Biosolids Technician I, Grade 7, Public Works/Wastewater Facilities

Retirement

02/28/09 WM. RICHARD DEMPSEY, Assistant Director, Grade 14, Public Safety/Emergency Communications

Milestones

02/27/1989 MARK JACOBS, Housing & Community Development Specialist—20 years

02/15/1994 DANIEL McLAUGHLIN, Dispatcher III—15 years

02/02/2004 NICOLE VAUTARD, Secretary—5 years

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

March 4, 2009 - Blood Pressure Checks at the Wastewater Facility from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

March 11, 2009 - Blood Pressure Checks at the Library at 9:00 am. Kent County Administrative Complex Room 257, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

March 11, 2009 - L&W Insurance rep. available to answer health insurance questions from 1:00-2:00 p.m., Kent County Administrative Complex Room 213.

March 11, 2009 - Staff Development Session on Preparing for your Performance Appraisal will be held at 9:00 a.m. in Room 220 A/B in the Kent County Administrative Complex.

March 17, 2009 - Employee Performance Appraisal System training session on how to complete the G.A.U.G.E. forms at 9:00 a.m. in Room 220 A/B in the Kent County Administrative Complex.

March 25, 2009 - CPR certification classes at Emergency Services Building Conference Room, 9 a.m. to 1 p. m.

April 10, 2009 - Good Friday holiday. County offices closed.

COUNTY BIRTHDAYS**MARCH**

- 01 Wendy Haywood, Community Services
- 03 Trudy Drummond, Finance
- 06 David Melvin, Public Works/WWF
- 07 Nyle Callaway, Public Works/WWF
- 09 Fran Gunning, Community Services/Libraries
- 10 Violet Glanden, Wills Office
- 11 Douglas Haddad, Public Safety/EMS
- 15 Shervina Miller, Public Safety/EMS
- 15 Brent Mollohan, Community Services/Recreation
- 19 Kelly Crumpley, Planning Services/Planning
- 20 Bruce Chillias, Public Safety/EMS
- 21 Michael Petit de Mange, County Administrator
- 23 Dennis Clark, Community Services/Parks
- 23 Holly Malone, Deeds Office
- 23 Ellen Mitchell, Assessment Office
- 24 Wilson Branham, Public Works/WWF
- 25 Georgette Williams, Comptroller
- 25 Dawnmarie Shane, Public Safety/EMS
- 26 Hilary Welliver, Community Services/Libraries
- 29 Theo Boone, Public Safety/EMS
- 29 Jason Courtney, Community Services/Parks
- 30 Allen Kearn, Public Works/WWF
- 30 William Hall, Public Works/Facilities Management

APRIL

- 01 Gale Maas, Administration
- 01 Mari Fabres, Public Works/WWF
- 03 Martha Lewis, Deeds Office
- 03 Terri Misiewicz, Finance
- 03 Jason Miller, Public Works/Engineering
- 03 Joshua Norris, Public Safety/Emergency Comm.
- 04 Tami Edwards, Administration-IT
- 06 Kathryn Ridgway, Public Safety/Emerg. Comm.
- 07 Marty Hayes, Clerk of the Peace Office
- 09 Karen Cooper, Tax Office
- 10 Mark Horton, Public Safety/EMS
- 11 George Kuerner, Public Works/WWF
- 11 Craig Harvey, Public Works/WWF
- 13 Sofia Culver, Finance
- 14 John Mieczkowski, Public Safety/EMS
- 15 Sarah Keifer, Planning Services Director
- 16 Donna Zerhusen, Finance
- 16 Michael Bishop, Public Safety/EMS
- 17 Rodney Smith, Planning Services/Planning
- 18 George DeBenedictis, Planning Services/I&E
- 20 Scott Kimball, Public Works/WWF
- 25 Robert Watts, Public Safety/Emergency Comm.

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Free Fruit Day Promotes Good Health & Nutrition

By Yvonne Messina, Personnel Technician I

March is National Nutrition Month and to help County employees maintain a healthy lifestyle, the Personnel Office will sponsor a Free Fruit Day on **Thursday, March 19th**. Employees are invited to stop by the Personnel Office for a free piece of fruit.



The National Institute for Health recommends 2-4 servings of fruit per day to maintain a balanced diet and good health.

Fruit is not only refreshing and tasty, but contains many vitamins that aid in strengthening your immune system, healing and much more. Here are some important facts about fruit.

Apples are fat free, sodium free, cholesterol free and an excellent source of fiber. **Apples** are a rich source of phytonutrient (plant based) antioxidants. **Apples** and **apple juice** are two of the best sources of the mineral boron, which may promote bone health. Because of apples' high fiber content, the fruit's natural sugars are slowly released into the blood stream, helping maintain steady blood sugar levels.

Bananas are an excellent source of vitamin B6. A lack of B6 in diets can cause weakness, irritability and insomnia. 1 ½ **bananas** gives the daily requirement of B6 essential for mental well being. **Bananas** are high in potassium, vital for proper brain function. They are one of the best sources of fruit fiber which is known to prevent bowel cancer. An average **banana** contains 120 calories.

All **oranges** are low in calories, have no cholesterol or sodium, excellent source of vitamin C, fiber, calcium, and folate. Eating an **orange** with a meal, and especially with vegetables, boosts the body's absorption of iron from plant food by nearly 400%.

Employees located outside of the Administrative Complex should contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310 to reserve their free piece of fruit.

County staff learns to drive defensively

By Yvonne Messina, Personnel Technician I

It may be just a little safer on the roads now, thanks to the defensive driving course many Kent County employees completed in February. The safe driving course is mandatory for employees operating a County vehicle on a regular basis as provided in Kent County Levy Court Policy 4-6. The Advanced Defensive Driving class was held on February 12.



Employees completing the Advanced Course were: CHRIS AUSTIN, MIKE BERRY, JOHN BUTLER, ROLAND CARTER, SOPHIE DEAR, KEN ECKARD, MARI FABRES, GINA GLANDEN, DIANA GOLT, WILLIAM HALL, DARIN JONES, RUTH ANN JONES, WAYNE McCARTY, ALLEN MATHENY, CHRISTINA MORTON, BRANDON OLENIK, LIZ PERRY, LISA SCHLAUCH, RICK SCHLAUCH, MELISSA STANLEY, JOHN SCHULTIES, ALAN TYSON, JESSE WALLACE, JOHN WITZKE, and JOHN ZISTL.

Employees taking the Basic Defensive Driving on February 19 were: RICH ALLEN, CHRIS AMMON, RON BOWMAN, EARL BRIEL, KRIS CONNELLY, JENNIFER DONAVON, KEVIN IMHOFF, SCOTT KIMBALL, JOHN MESSINA, JASON MILLER, RICHARD MOSLEY, MEGAN REEDY, MIKE ROBBINS, DAVID ROGERS, BONNIE VOSHELL, CHRIS WHITE, and SUSAN WILLSON.

The defensive driving certification is valid for three years and employees completing the program are usually eligible for a reduction in their auto insurance premiums.

The county benefits from having safer drivers in County-owned vehicles.

Congratulations

Congratulations to BRIAN HALL, Public Works/Engineering, on the birth of a son, Cyrus Lee Hall, on February 24, 2009 at 8 a.m. Cyrus weighed in at 8 lbs and 10 ounces! Mom, Dad and Baby are all doing fine.

FROM THE STACKS



Reviewed by Sandra Martin, Library Technician

Odd Thomas

By Dean Koontz

Although Dean Koontz's novel, *Odd Thomas*, may have hit the shelves in December 2003, it remains a great read. The story takes place in present time in a small town called Pico Mundo. Everything that happens in small towns happens in this book except for one big twist. The name of the book, *Odd Thomas*, and the name of the title character are one in the same.

Odd Thomas is a young man, who is a fry cook (with higher aspirations someday), in his early twenties. He loves a girl, he has an apartment, he goes to work every day and has nice friends.

What makes Odd Thomas odd is that he leads an unusual life. He sees dead people and when he sees dead people, it is because there is going to be some terrible crime coming up soon. Usually when he sees these dead people they are murder victims trying to get Odd Thomas to help them solve their murder, or to forewarn that there is going to be a murder coming.

Along with the dead people there are these things called bodachs that run around the area where the murder is going to take place. There can be as many as 100 or as little as two or three, depending on how grisly the murder is going to be. The bodachs really enjoy watching these evil deeds as they occur. So when Odd Thomas sees these things, it is a sure sign trouble is coming. Only Odd Thomas can see them. They are ghostly beings who slither and swoop and enter dwellings through the walls or roofs or whatever.

Odd Thomas has a working relationship with the town sheriff. In the past when Odd Thomas has experienced these visions and has gone to the sheriff, they have worked together to thwart the crime. The sheriff is one of the rare ones who actually believe what Odd has to tell him. The plot gets really sticky when Odd's own girlfriend is in danger - as is Odd himself - because of a complete maniac who is a weird kind of fungus man, a potential mass murderer.

This book shows that, as usual, Koontz takes

(Continued on next column)

Recipe of the Month

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

SALSA BEEF STEW

Prep & Cook Time: 30 minutes

Yield: 10 cups

Serves: 8

1½ pounds lean ground beef
 1 large onion, chopped
 3 tablespoons chili powder
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 1 carrot, chopped
 1 jar (16 ounces) mild salsa
 1 can (14-14½ ounces) chicken broth (1¾ cups)
 1 can (15-19 ounces) no-salt-added black beans, rinsed and drained
 1 can (11 ounces) no-salt-added whole-kernel corn, drained
 1 can (14½ ounces) diced tomatoes in puree
 ½ cup loosely packed fresh cilantro leaves.

Heat nonstick 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until very hot but not smoking. Add ground beef and half of onion and cook 8 minutes or until liquid evaporates and beef is browned, stirring occasionally to break up beef. Stir in chili powder and cook 2 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add carrot and remaining onion, and cook 5 minutes or until golden, stirring occasionally. Stir in salsa, broth, beans, corn, and tomatoes with their juice; cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Stir beef mixture into bean mixture; heat through. Sprinkle with cilantro to serve.

Recipe courtesy Good Housekeeping via www.delish.com/recipes

(Continued from next column)

bizarre situations and makes them completely believable. For a thriller, and a chiller, this book is surprisingly warm. You want to help Odd Thomas and his girlfriend and you turn each page with expectation that hopefully Odd Thomas has saved the town and his own life and the life of his girlfriend. I really enjoy Dean Koontz's books because when you're reading them you can totally escape into them. I give this book an eight on a scale of 1-10. **3416** **7344**

You can do better at eval. time—learn the 7 stupid mistakes

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

Wikipedia describes “performance appraisal” as “a method by which the job performance of an employee is evaluated (generally in terms of quality, quantity, cost and time). Performance appraisal is a part of career development.”



That said, are you ready? Do you prepare with a pre-appraisal checklist? Do you know the seven stupid things employees do to spoil their performance appraisals?

Preparing for your next performance appraisal will be the topic of March’s employee development session, and will include those seven stupid things you can do to spoil your appraisal. The session (one session only) will be held **Wednesday, March 11**, at 9:00 a.m. in room 220 A/B in the Kent County Administrative Complex.

To sign up for this session, contact me in Personnel at 744-2312, by e-mail (if you have a list), or in person. If you initially forget to sign up and wish to attend, or discover that you will be able to attend on the day of the training session, simply show up and sign in.

Employees who attended a February “Time Management” session were DOROTHY DOYLE, JUNE GLADDEN, EVELYN JOPP, GALE MAAS, YVONNE MESSINA, SHEILA ROSS, and ALAN TYSON.

Congratulations to EVELYN JOPP for achieving 15 CEU’s of voluntary training, and making her eligible for her third one percent pay increase!

Thank you for your continued interest in employee development! However, in the October 2008 issue of *Kent Connections*, it was noted that monthly training sessions may have to be curtailed if there is not marked improvement in participation. Beginning this month, there will be one session per month instead of two. If you are interested in attending a session, please remember that there will not be an afternoon session to attend should you forget to attend the morning session.

Stay alert when coming to aid of another

By Lt. David Mick, EMS Special Operations Supervisor

The sky may not be falling, but how safe are you out there?????????????



This article has a rather gruesome twist to it. It presents an awful scenario, but one that could endanger not only first responders, but well intentioned people who might only be trying to do the right thing and help. The news

stories were forwarded to our Medics by one of their own and, since the two incidents sited occurred on opposite sides of the country, I thought it would be appropriate to spread the word a little more.

Recently a new way to commit suicide has been discovered by mixing two chemicals that can be bought over the counter at local stores. They are Bonide – a sulfur spray used as an insecticide for fruit trees and hydrochloric (muriatic) acid. Once mixed, the chemicals produce heat and a flammable, noxious gas that causes the subject to pass out and the heart stops within minutes. The process appears to be quick and painless. Two recent cases, one in Pasadena, California and the other at Lake Allatoona in Bartow County, Georgia, involved young men in their early 20’s. Both were found locked inside their cars with the chemicals. Each left a note on the car warning anyone around of danger. The car at Lake Allatoona had been taped to prevent gas from escaping.

The “take action” side of emergency responders and the Good Samaritan in all of us could easily result in potentially dangerous actions given this scenario. When we see what looks like someone in need it’s hard not to take immediate steps to intervene. We don’t immediately think of potential risks unless we have specialized training or have experienced a particular risk before.

The bottom line is we need to be alert to anything that doesn’t seem “normal” and know when and how to call for assistance. It’s not that we should turn away and ignore a situation, but it’s a different day and the potential for bad outcomes seems to be around every corner. Stay aware. Stay safe.

EMPLOYEE COUNCIL NEWS



By Michele Lapinski, Employee Council Secretary

On behalf of the Employee Council, I would like to take this time to say "Thank You" to departing member JAYNE ZERANSKI for all her hard work and dedication on behalf of the employees. Two-thousand and eight was a busy year for the Employee Council in terms of events and fundraisers; and without the Council coming together and giving generously of their time, it would not have been possible. Hopefully, we'll be able to duplicate that success into 2009 and beyond.

Since we're saying "Thank you," I'd also like to offer an especially big one to BRIAN LEWIS and JOHN ZISTL from Facilities Management for volunteering their time and cooking skills for the Fat Tuesday Breakfast. You guys are awesome! Thanks also to everyone who came out and supported the event.

In other news, the Employee Council has selected the Delaware State Troopers Association facility in Cheswold as the site for the 2009 holiday evening event on Saturday, December 5. More details will be announced later.

March will see the induction of one new face to the Employee Council when AUDREY STANFORD joins remaining (and returning) members KIMM DIXON, YVONNE MESSINA, BRENT MOLLOHAN, PAT ORONA, LORI SHORT and I. Audrey will begin her tenure with the Council's March meeting. New officers will also be elected at that time.

The bi-weekly 50/50 raffles continue to roll on, with jackpots reaching up to, and occasionally beyond, the \$100 mark. Your next chances to win will be on March 6 and March 20. E-mail reminders will go out a day or two before. Good luck! **0666**

Discount Movie Tickets

Discount movie tickets to Dover Mall's Carmike Theaters are available for sale in the Personnel Office.



The discount tickets cost \$6.00 each but are not valid during the first 12 days of any newly released movie, but are valid for any scheduled time. The ticket price increases to \$7.00 each after this group sells out, but they can be used for any movie on any day or time. **1952**

Tech Talk



Consumer Gear goes Green

By Mary Ratliff, Network Specialist

Higher energy costs, growing public awareness of carbon consumption, and new laws regulating e-waste disposal are inspiring both vendors and buyers to focus on environmentally suitable products.

The Sustainability Planet pavilion at the annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas nearly doubled in size this year, with a couple dozen companies displaying green packaging, alternative power sources, tools such as solar rechargers, and gadgets for assessing energy use. In addition, many major vendors devoted sections of their CES booths to publicizing their environmental efforts--everything from lowering the wattage demands of common products such as TVs and DVD players to launching recycling efforts and buy-back programs.



Toshiba won kudos--in the form of "green" ratings by Greenpeace, released during the week of CES--for producing eco-friendly laptops. The environmentalist group's periodic report recognizes manufacturers' efforts to adopt ecologically responsible practices, but the numbers show that all tech vendors have a way to go. The product rated as "greenest," Lenovo's L2440x computer monitor, earned a score of only 6.9 on a 10-point scale. Meanwhile, Toshiba's Portege R600 received a score of 5.57 out of 10.

Many other vendors emphasize compliance with Energy Star ratings, the U.S. government's power consumption standards. According to Craig Hershberg, director of environmental affairs for Toshiba America, "each successive generation of TVs is more eco-friendly." A "green" section of Toshiba's CES booth displayed the company's 46-inch flat-panel 46XV5450 model, which uses an average of 220 watts of power, as well as a prototype of a potential next-generation model that runs on 164 watts.

Many other major vendors presented side-by-side displays of flat-panels to demonstrate their improved power efficiency. LG Electronics showed power-efficient models in a section of its booth labeled "Life is good, when it's green" and touted its recycling program. The company also



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Join Kent County Parks in observing Earth Day

By Carl Solberg, Parks Division Manager

Kent County Parks Division joins forces with the City of Dover and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to protect water resources and shoreline habitats of the St. Jones River at the City's Silver Lake Park.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED to help plant native trees and shrubs along the riparian edge of the tidal St. Jones River at Dover's Silver Lake Recreation Area. Surface water quality protection efforts are needed throughout Kent County's watersheds. This particular project is a continuation of the St. Jones River Watershed Riparian Buffer Project undertaken by the DNREC 319 Clean Water Act Program and the City of Dover, together with neighbors and friends of the watershed.

Buffer plantings and stormwater and nutrient stewardship projects are voluntary efforts to reduce pollutant and nutrient sources to restore the St. Jones River, and this project is leading by example on our public lands.

This joint venture with Dover and DNREC acknowledges the earlier work of City volunteers, Dover Grounds Crew, and DNREC Division of Water Resources to re-establish a naturalized riparian landscape adjacent to the stream segment just below the Silver Lake Dam. Thus far the St. Jones River Riparian Buffer Project has accomplished the planting of 140 native trees including Red Maples, River Birch, Black Gum, Redbud, and Swamp White Oak; shrubs including Winterberry, Sweet Pepper Bush, Virginia Sweetspire and Viburnums. Volunteers also planted native perennials like Marsh Hibiscus and Joe-Pye Weed. Visit the Silver Lake Recreation Area north of Division Street and see what has been accomplished.

This year additional plantings will be performed with comparable native plant materials, some propagated by the PolyTech High School and some purchased by DNREC. In addition to planting, volunteers will also help remove invasive plants in the urban woods near the stream.

This Project will continue over the next two years to include additional public and private institutional lands within this highly visible area with other planned activities. Those other elements include: construction of a floodplain wetland to filter urban stormwater and re-routing contained stormwater to sheetflow through restored habitats. Kent County Parks Division and the St. Jones Greenway Commission sponsored by Kent County remain partners with the State and City for stormwater and habitat restoration wherever these opportunities can be developed.

IF YOU ARE VOLUNTEERING...

When: Saturday, April 25, 2009, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. – Rain or Shine.

Who/What: Families, individuals, groups, and volunteer organizations are needed to help the Kent County Community Services, Parks Division

and the St. Jones Greenway Commission to support conservation stewardship on public lands. Funding for the project is provided by DNREC and the City of Dover.

Where: Silver Lake Recreation Area is located in Dover, on Kings Highway, north of Division Street.(see map).

More: Please bring work gloves, hard-soled, lace-up shoes or boots (no sneakers, please). Bring a Round-Point shovel if you can. Be sure to dress appropriately for outdoor work.

A handicapped-accessible restroom, drinks, Lunch, and a commemorative T-Shirt will be provided to all volunteers courtesy of the DNREC Division of Water Resources. Earth Day is a continuation of 14 years of Kent County's commitment to community volunteerism on the national anniversary of Earth Day, 1970. We remember and celebrate Earth Day to help us continue the hope for sustainable human and other living resource communities.

TO REGISTER as a volunteer and for more information, please contact Glenn "Wayne" McCarty, Kent County Division of Parks, 744-2489 or e-mail wayne.mccarty@co.kent.de.us. Volunteers may also register on the day of the event at the project site.



BENEFIT BLURBS

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

Mark your calendars: Open Enrollment start on May 1, 2009. Watch for more information in next month's *Kent Connections*.

During the first week of February, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Delaware (BCBSD) "A Guide to Your Benefits" booklets were forwarded to employees and retirees covered under the County's BCBSD plan. At that time, a few employees asked about Provider Directories. The directories are available on-line at www.bcbsde.com. Once you are on the BCBSD webpage, you will see the header "MENU CONNECTIONS" on the left of the screen. Click on the downward-pointing arrow to the right of "For Customers," then click on "Find a doctor, lab, or hospital," then click on the button to the right labeled "GO." On the next screen at "Choose a directory:" the default will be set to the local BCBS network. If you need the nationwide or worldwide directory, please change the setting to the desired directory by clicking the button to the left of the category desired. Under "Choose a provider type:" there is a menu of almost 50 categories from which to select. Under "Choose one or more of the following search criteria:," the choices help the user to narrow the selection field. Then, click on the SUBMIT button and the selections should appear on the next screen.

If you have any questions about County benefits, please feel free to call the Personnel Office at 744-2312. **6472** **7448** **0189**

COUNTY BIRTHDAYS

(Continued from Page 4)

- 25 Melissa Smith, Public Safety/EMS
- 27 Richard Mosley, Public Works/WWF
- 28 Daniel McLaughlin, Public Safety/Emerg. Comm.
- 29 Keith Mumford, Community Servs./Recreation
- 30 Darren Jones, Public Safety/EMS

Valentine's candy winner

Cupid delivered a six pack of hot pink valentine themed cups filled with hugs and kisses to ELIZABETH PERRY of Facilities Management for coming closest with a guess of 231 to the actual 232 pieces in the annual Valentine's Day Candy Guess Contest. Thanks for participating!



Welcome to Levy Court!



Name: SUSAN WILLSON



Job: Appraisal Systems Administrator

Date hired: February 1, 2009

Education: Delaware Technical and Community College Information Technology classes

What I like most about my new job: There are new challenges every day

Greatest accomplishment: My

children

Greatest challenges or obstacles: Dealing with family health issues

Future goals: To be totally debt-free

Person/event that most inspired me in my career: A previous co-worker, Rita Smith

If I had it to do over, I would have done this differently: Done better in school

I'm most relaxed and happy when I'm doing this: Spending time with family and friends

Family: Husband, John; daughter, Stacy; son, Michael

Most recent movie enjoyed: The Reader

Favorite TV show: House

Favorite sport: Baseball

Favorite meal: Roast beef

Favorite music: I listen to all types of music

Favorite saying or slogan: It is never right to do wrong to do right.

Who has had the most impact on my life: My grandmother

A dream I have is to: Vacation in all 50 states

If I won a million dollars I would: Share with family

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Love roller coasters

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Take a helicopter to the bottom of the Grand Canyon to have breakfast

Three words that describe me: Loyal, easy going

High Praise

Kudos to SCOTT TANNER, Inspections & Enforcement, for a recent Constituent Comment Card describing the experience as "very pleasant from the first day to day of permit pick up." *Outstanding!*

Calculate your health risks with Body Mass Index

Compiled by Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

Body mass index (BMI) is a formula that uses your weight and height to estimate your body fat and health risks. If your BMI is less than 18.5, you're considered underweight; between 18.5 and 24.9 is considered a healthy weight range for your height; between 25 and 29.9, you're considered overweight; 30 or higher equals obesity.

If you are overweight or obese, hauling extra weight puts you at risk for developing high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol or other lipid disorders, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers. Losing weight aids in prevention and control of these diseases. According to National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) guidelines, assessment of overweight involves using three key measures: BMI, waist circumference, and risk factors for diseases and conditions linked to obesity.

BMI is a reliable gauge of body fat, which is related to the risk of disease and death. It is valid for both men and women, but has some limits: overestimating body fat in athletes and others with a muscular build, and underestimating body fat in older persons and those who have lost muscle mass. Access www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/bmi.tbl.htm for an extensive table.

To determine your **waist circumference**, place a measuring tape snugly around your waist. It is a good indicator of your abdominal fat (another predictor of your risk for heart disease and other diseases). This risk increases with a waist measurement over 40 inches in men and over 35 inches in women.

Other than overweight or obesity, **additional risk factors** are high blood pressure (hypertension), high LDL-cholesterol ("bad" cholesterol), low HDL-cholesterol ("good" cholesterol), high triglycerides, high blood glucose (sugar), family history of premature heart disease, physical inactivity, and cigarette smoking.

For people considered obese or overweight with two or more risk factors, the guidelines recommend weight loss. Even a small weight loss (just 10 percent of your current weight) will lower your risk of developing diseases linked to obesity. Those who are overweight, do not have a high waist measure-

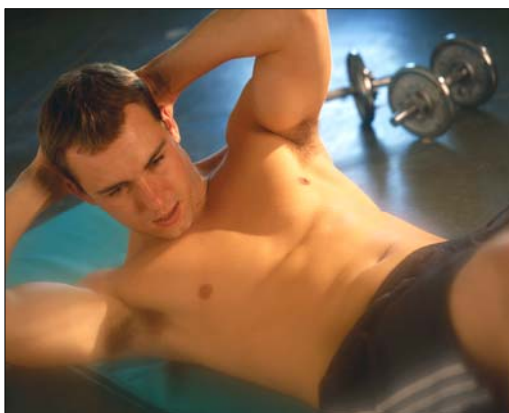
ment, and have less than two risk factors may need to maintain their weight instead of losing weight.

Ask your doctor if there is increased risk and need to lose weight. The doctor will assess your BMI, waist measurement and other risk factors. Even a small weight loss will help to lower your risk of developing those diseases.

The NHLBI guidelines offer a new approach for the measurement of overweight and obesity and a set of steps for safe and effective weight loss. Their top recommendations are:

- ♥ Weight loss to lower the blood pressure in overweight and obese persons with high blood pressure.
- ♥ Weight loss to lower elevated levels of total cholesterol, LDL-cholesterol, and triglycerides, and to raise low levels of HDL-cholesterol in overweight and obese persons with dyslipidemia.
- ♥ Weight loss to lower elevated blood glucose levels in overweight and obese persons with type 2 diabetes.
- ♥ Use BMI to assess overweight and obesity. Body weight can be used to follow weight loss, and to establish the effectiveness of therapy.
- ♥ The BMI to classify overweight and obesity and to estimate relative risk of disease compared to normal weight.
- ♥ The waist circumference should be used to assess abdominal fat content.
- ♥ The initial goal of weight loss therapy should be to reduce body weight by about 10 percent from the current weight. With success, and if needed, further weight loss can be attempted.
- ♥ Weight loss should be about one to two pounds weekly for six months, with the follow-up strategy based on the amount of weight lost.
- ♥ Low calorie diets (LCD) for weight loss in overweight and obese persons. Reducing fat is a practical way to reduce calories.
- ♥ Reducing dietary fat alone without reducing calories is not enough for weight loss. Reducing dietary fat and dietary carbohydrates can help reduce calories.
- ♥ A diet that is individually planned to help create a 500 to 1,000 kcal/day deficit should be vital to achieving a weight loss of one to two pounds per week.

(Continued on Page 12)



Welcome to Levy Court!



Name: MICHAEL R. ROBBINS



Job: Maintenance Mechanic I

Date hired: February 16, 2009

Education: High school graduate
LF

What I like most about my new job: Having variety in my job on a day-to-day basis.

Greatest accomplishment: My daughter

Greatest challenges or obstacles: Make a great life for my kids

Future goals: Be a great father

Person/event that most inspired me in my career: My wife; having her and my children in my life makes going to work everyday worthwhile so I can take care of them.

I'm most relaxed and happy when I'm doing this: Spending time with my family

Family: My wife, Jennifer; my daughter, Chloe; and my son, Connor

Most recent movie enjoyed: Eagle Eye

Favorite TV show: NCIS

Favorite sport: NASCAR

Favorite meal: Steak and potatoes

Favorite music: Country

Who has had the most impact on my life: My wife

A dream I have is to: See my kids grow

If I won a million dollars I would: Invest it for my children

Motorcycle diaries



JAMES NUNES, Maintenance Mechanic II, has been riding for at least 18 years. His current ride is a 1990 Honda Pacific Coast 800, which he selected for the price. His advice for motorists is "Watch out for us, and be kind." James rides the motorcycle year round, for commuting to work and anything else he can use it for because of the price of gas. He said that wearing a helmet is the right thing to do because it could save your life, but he doesn't wear one. James originally was interested in motorcycles for his enjoyment of the open road and fresh air, but now it's an economical necessity. He also wants us to know that not all bikers do the crazy things some riders do, and even motorcyclists have to watch out for the crazy bikers. **6101** **5824**

Calculate your health risks with Body Mass Index

(Continued from Page 11)

♥ Physical activity should be part of a full weight loss therapy and weight control program; it modestly contributes to weight loss in overweight and obese adults, may decrease abdominal fat, increases cardiorespiratory fitness, and may help with maintenance of weight loss.

♥ Physical activity should be a basic part of weight loss therapy and weight maintenance. At first, modest levels of physical activity at 30-45 minutes, 3-5 days a week, should be encouraged. Adults should set a long-term goal to accumulate 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity on most (preferably all) days of the week.

♥ The mix of a reduced calorie diet and increased physical activity is recommended since it produces weight loss that may also result in decreased abdominal fat and increased cardiorespiratory fitness.

♥ Behavior therapy is a nifty add-on when included in handling weight loss and weight maintenance.

♥ Weight loss and weight maintenance therapy should use the mix of LCD's, increased physical activity, and behavior therapy.

♥ After successful weight loss, weight loss maintenance is enhanced by using physical activity and dietary and behavior therapies, which should be con-

(Continued on Page 14)

Employee performance appraisal process starts in March

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

It's that time of the year when supervisors dust off the G.A.U.G.E. system handbook and begin preparation for the annual employee performance appraisal (evaluation) process—or they should be.



The GAUGE format, introduced five years ago, has been used consistently throughout the years with great success. Employees who were having performance problems either began to measure up or found themselves without a job.

The format has been praised as more objective with scoring more easily understood by both parties, the employee and the appraiser.

The comprehensive performance appraisal system rates each employee on “Core Value Competencies”, such as customer service; ethics and integrity; job knowledge and skills; professionalism; and self-management.

The system also rates each employee on “Performance Essential Competencies”, such as communication; development of self; initiative; interpersonal skills; quality of work; and teamwork. Each employee is further rated for performance in a specific skill group, such as Clerical, Maintenance/Trades, Technical, Professional, Supervisory and Management.

The levels of performance achievement are divided into five areas - Ineffective, Somewhat Effective, Effective, Highly Effective, and Exceptional. A typical employee would score at different levels in each competency. The lower levels would indicate a need to improve, and the new format would give

clear examples of the type performance required to achieve the higher level.

The annual performance evaluation process is required by the Kent County Code and should be viewed by employees as a meaningful opportunity to discuss areas of improvement and goals for the upcoming year.

An employee's performance appraisal score determines if the employee receives an annual step increase and, more importantly, determines whether an employees should keep his/her job. The Personnel Chapter of the County Code provides for the termination of employees failing to achieve two consecutive satisfactory or “effective” scores of 3.0 or better.

Basically, performance appraisals or evaluations are a management tool used to measure, maintain, and improve employee job performance. It is an opportunity for the supervisor to advise and counsel employees on areas that need improvement as well as those areas where performance is satisfactory or better than expected.

A training session on the employee performance appraisal system will be conducted by the Personnel Office on **Tuesday, March 17** at 9:00 a.m. in Complex Room 220.

During this two-month-long evaluation period, supervisors will meet with each employee to discuss his/her performance for the past year. In situations where performance has declined, both the supervisor and the employee should jointly establish a performance improvement plan. This plan must be written into the evaluation and acknowledged by the employee.

The GAUGE evaluation forms, which are recommended to be completed in advance by employees themselves, are on the County's intranet on the V: drive, in the *CountyInfo* folder, in *Forms* file under *GAUGEPreappraisalDoc*.

Electronic telephone directory rolls out in March

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

The new electronic version of the Kent County Levy Court telephone directory has completed beta testing and should be rolled out in March.



The directory must be loaded onto each individual PC by the Information Technology Office as a webpage icon on the desktop that

can be scrolled or can be searched by typing “CTRL F” and entering the first letter or letters of the first or last name or division/office.

The new electronic directory features each employee's office number and will eventually be updated to include titles to make searching even easier. A few hard copies on yellow paper will also be printed for those few offices without computer access.

For more information or to report errors, contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310.

CAT BOX



By Cathleen McLean, Payroll Administrator

Changes in the 2009 Tax Year Tables after the Stimulus

The Economic Stimulus package recently approved by Congress will put more money in your pocket each pay period, but has caused many employees to express some frustration when trying to understand the tax table changes. I hope this helps:

The major issue affecting all Kent County employees are in the IRS Tax Tables changes. Each bracket of the Tax Tables for 2009 has increased the range before earnings are taxable. This means that less of your wages will be taxed and more will be taxed at a lower rate.

For example: Previously the Married 10% bracket for 2009 was taxed starting after the first \$8,000 thru \$23,950. With the Stimulus, the bracket starts at \$15,750 thru \$24,450. The Married 15% bracket for 2009 now is taxed starting after \$24,450 thru \$75,650. The Married 25% bracket for 2009 is taxed starting after \$77,650 thru \$118,130.

This means no taxes will be taken for the first \$15,750 of your taxable income if you are claiming Married. Also, the beginning 10% tax bracket has been increased to \$24,450, meaning that more of the money you earn after \$15,750 will be taxed in the lower 10% bracket, resulting in lower taxes being withheld up thru the 28% bracket.

At the beginning of the 33% bracket the tables remain unchanged. There are similar changes made to the table for Single Tax Tables

To see all of the changes for each bracket go to www.irs.gov then type in "2009 Tax Tables" on the search line and scroll down to the item that says "New Withholdings Table for 2009" dated Feb 23, '09, click on the words Notice 1036 (highlighted in blue) and scroll down the PDF document to the 2009 Tax Tables, Tax Table #7 Annual Payroll Period.

If you have any questions please give me a call at 744-2387.

BMI—Calculate your health risks

(Continued from Page 12)

continued indefinitely. Drug therapy can also be used, but its safety and value past one year of total treatment have not been recognized.

♥ A weight maintenance program should be priority after the initial 6 months of weight loss therapy.

Tech Talk

(Continued from page 8)

demonstrated a "green plasma" TV that draws an average of 150 watts per hour. Comparable LED screens could shrink power demand to 50 watts per hour, a representative noted. Also, LG recently shipped the first TVs that qualified for the LCD TV Association's GreenTV logo program. The company's LG50-, LG60-, and LG70-series TVs (with screens ranging from 42 to 52 inches) use ambient light sensors that automatically decrease power and lower the unit's brightness in a dark room, thereby saving power. Panasonic offered side-by-side comparisons showing the lower power demands of its new camcorders, blu-ray DVD players, and TVs, including a plasma model that averages 150 watts per hour.

Panasonic, Toshiba, and Sharp offer buyback, recycling, and proper disposal of CRTs, laptops, and other electronic gear. The Manufacturers Recycling Management program operates in all 50 states, inspired partly by the fact that 20 U.S. states now require proper disposal of CRTs. Sony operates a national Take Back Recycling program that has collected more than 12 million pounds of electronic waste since it began in 2007. Its centers accept all Sony electronics products and batteries.

Component developers are getting greener under the hood, too. ATP's EarthDrive is constructed predominantly of recycled and biodegradable material; a flash Earthcard is in development. The company is also emphasizing power-efficient, solid-state "system in package" units.

Energy use assessment products are drawing attention, too. The purpose of these devices is to help businesses and consumers identify power drains and energy-hungry appliances that are expensive to leave on while not in use. For example, the "Kill a Watt" device from P3 International plugs into any power outlet and into any appliance, where it monitors the flow of electricity, assessing usage, and identifying leaks. The Ecobutton, from a company named Ecobutton, puts your computer into a state of "green hibernation" that is supposed to be more power-efficient than normal hibernation. It also reports your usage. "People are often surprised" at how much electricity a hard-drive backup system consumes, according to a P3 representative.

A CES demonstration showed Greentalk technology in action, monitoring several common electronic products and then lowering the power stream to what the printer, laptop, cordless phone, and router needed in order to operate. A new community site, [I Want My Green Plug](http://IWantMyGreenPlug.com), invites Green Plug fans to urge vendors to license & implement the technology.

Workforce Diversity Review eyes improved hiring strategies

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director



Last fiscal year, Levy Court contracted with the University of Delaware to review and update a workplace diversity hiring study completed in 2001 for the County. Last month, the completed review was published and Levy Court directed the County Administrator and Personnel Director to coordinate implementation of the study's recommendations.

Despite faithfully following the recommendations of the 2001 study, Personnel Office staff recognized that after almost 7 years, the County's workforce profile had changed very little. Levy Court agreed and decided to engage the University's Public Administration Institute to determine what else needed to be done to better reflect the greater community being served.

According to the University's report, the County's demographics reflect a 70% white, 21% black, and 3.8% Hispanic population with women pegged at 52.4%. About half have high school/GED or greater education level. These numbers are compared to the actual make up of the County's workforce at 91.8% white, 6.2% black, and less than 1% Hispanic. Males make up 59% of the workforce compared to 41% for females.

The report outlines three primary recommendations: 1) a demonstrated commitment to workforce diversity by publishing a statement of expectation for the County to be an inclusive employer and the creation of a taskforce to spearhead broader diversity initiatives; 2) a greater effort to engage the broader community in improved workforce diversity efforts by soliciting the various advisory committee members to inform the public about job vacancies, participating in job fairs or holding open houses, offering internships to local high school students; and 3) revising current policies to better align with diversity initiatives through the elimination of in-house job postings and well publicized hiring objectives.

New federal law requires update to FMLA leave policy

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Congress amended the federal Family & Medical



Leave Act last year to expand its protections to military families and set an implementation date of early 2009. In response to that Congressional mandate, Levy Court recently approved Policy 11-4, Military Family Leave to address the new provisions.

While the new law did make some minor adjustments to the more familiar FMLA, the act was more focused on expanding the benefits to military families.

The new policy specifically provides for 26 weeks of unpaid Military Caregiver Leave per 12-month period for an employee to provide care to a member of the military undergoing treatment for a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty while on active duty. This equates to 14 more weeks of leave than traditional FMLA.

In addition, the new policy permits employees to take up to 12 weeks of Active Duty Leave if they are the parent, spouse, child or next of kin of a service member in the National Guard or Reserves so they can participate in official ceremonies and programs, make farewell or arrival arrangements, make arrangements for urgent child/elder care, attend to affairs caused by the death or missing status of servicemember, attend to post deployment activities or spend time with the servicemember during temporary rest and recuperation leave, etc.

Like traditional FMLA, the employee must make application and submit supporting documentation, when possible. In addition, employers must maintain all employee benefits during the military leave and restore the individual to his/her position upon return. Employees must use any accrued sick leave during the leave, but would be permitted to retain one week of either for future use.

For more information, contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310.

SOME ANSWERS TO THOSE NAGGING QUESTIONS

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Q. *I just love the new electronic version of this employee newsletter. But I do have one criticism. It is hard to locate stories that continue onto another page. Can't you just write the entire story on one page? It would help a lot.*

A. Thanks for the compliment. Your employee newsletter is prepared using Microsoft Publisher® software and the formatting is limited. Keep in mind that we still have to print some hard copies of the newsletter, since not all County employees or retirees have computer access. In addition, the newsletter takes an extraordinary amount of time to complete each month and the thought of having to produce two distinct versions—one formatted for the web and the other for print seems overwhelming. That being said, we will work with IT to see if there is an easier way to achieve this than I imagine. In the meantime, happy e-reading.

Q. *It occurs to me that if the County had not spent thousands of dollars on the window blinds in the Administrative Complex, we would not have this serious budget deficit and I would be able to get a raise next year.*

A. The Complex blinds were purchased with Capital Project Budget funds, so it has no impact on the current budget or the shortfall. By law, each County budget is for a single year. The County is required to adopt a balanced budget, which means the budgeted expenses cannot exceed the budgeted revenues for the particular year. No one should believe for a minute that the County is broke. We have about \$25 million in general fund reserves, \$9 million of capital fund reserves, and \$7 million in restricted reserves. These figures do not include sewer funds. As a current expense, your desired pay increase must come from the expenses budgeted and the revenue projected in next year's budget. A typical 3% COLA adds \$420,000 of salary expenses. Include the normal 2% step and another \$280,000 is tacked on. So where does the \$700,000 of revenues needed to match the expense in FY2010 for your raise come from?

Q. *Where did these reserves come from and why can't we spend them?*

A. Over many, many years, excess revenues from each previous year's budget were set aside rather than being spent. It is a credit to our Finance Department

and the various County department/office managers. Now, unlike many governments, we are in a position to weather the financial storm swirling around us. Yes, the reserves could be spent, but it would not be the wise thing to do. Once they are spent, it will take years and years to get them back. So the smart thing is to avoid a deficit budget, and instead use the reserves to maintain our bond rating and pay for certain large expenses like our \$1.3 million annual pension contribution and various fiduciary obligations.

Q. *If the County had not needlessly sent people to exotic training conferences, we would have plenty of money for pay increases.*

A. Employee costs consume 75% of the budget, the training & travel line item you speak of accounts for less than half of one percent of the budget. While conferences should be scaled back in lean years, and they are for FY2010, one should not lose sight of the purpose. Training conferences train employees to be better at their jobs—there is value in that for the organization. And a number of employees are required to have job related certifications, which can only be maintained by attending such conferences. Training conferences are not all fun, they are work. County Policy requires the employee to attend all the training sessions and workshops—and occasionally some are really long and boring seminars. In addition, the employee is away from his/her family for days and without the comforts of home. Many often dread the effort index required to attend these training conferences, but do it to gain important knowledge and skills to enhance the workplace.

Q. *I understand that the proposed early retirement option applies only to those employees currently eligible to retire. I want to go, so why can't I take advantage of the program?*

A. You are correct that the pension enhancement ordinance as currently written and scheduled for public hearing on March 10 offers an incentive to 34 employee currently eligible to retire. Since you are not currently eligible, you cannot participate—unless the ordinance is amended. The purpose of the pension incentive is to reduce personnel costs in the County's FY2009 and FY2010 budgets. It was determined that the costs of incentivizing the currently eligible employees would be sufficient to make the effort financially worthwhile at this time.